

Old Town Master Plan - 2012 Update

Town of Bluffton
July 11, 2012



Outline

- **History & Background**
- **Completed and On-Going Initiatives**
- **Public and Private Old Town Investment**
- **Future Initiatives**



History & Background

- **1996 Old Town was designated a National Historic District with 46 contributing structures and 2 contributing sites**
- **2005 Town of Bluffton was established as a Preserve America Community**
- **2006 the Old Town Master Plan was adopted**
- **2008 the Old Town was resurveyed and found to have 86 contributing structures (structures greater than 50 years old with architectural / historical significance)**

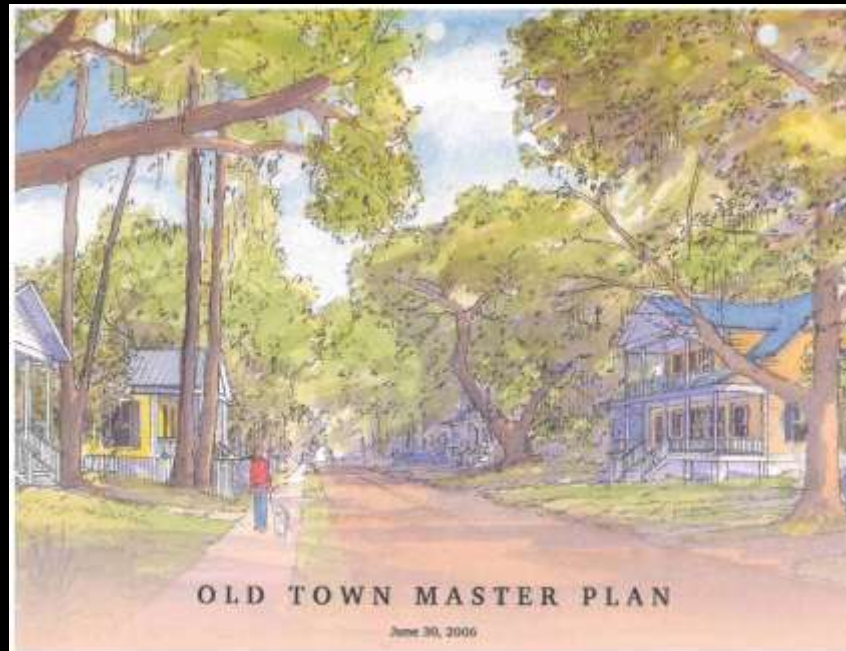


Old Town Bluffton Historic District



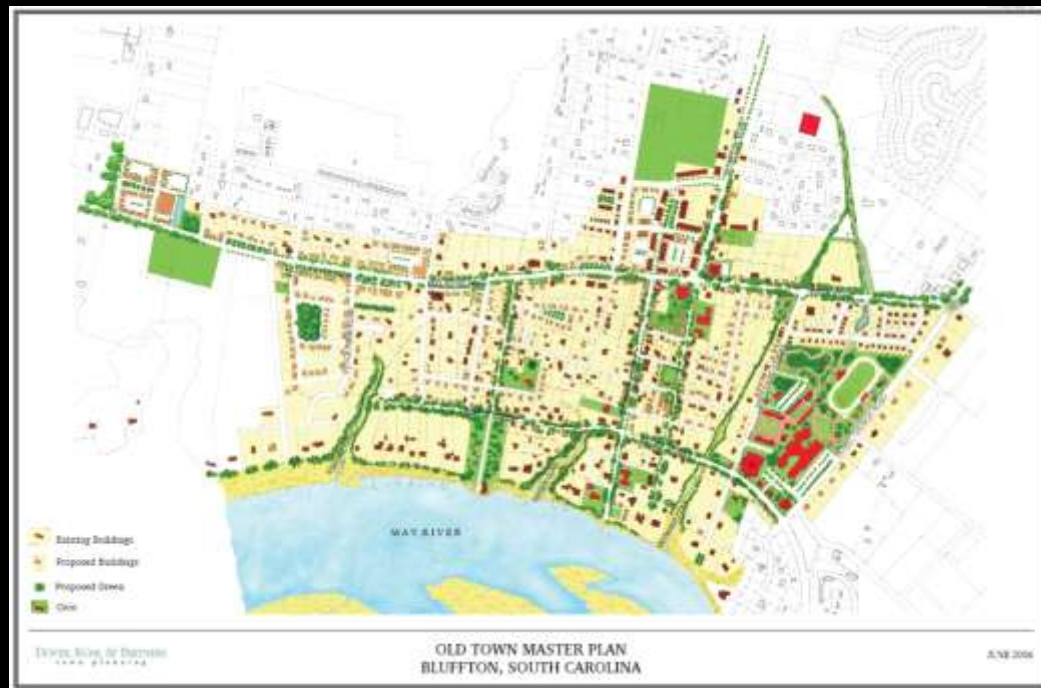
Old Town Master Plan Vision

- **“The Town strives to achieve economic vitality through development and redevelopment while ensuring that Bluffton’s community character and historical heritage are preserved.”**
- **Three principles guide this vision:**
 - **Preserve & Protect Our Legacy;**
 - **Foster Connectedness in All Things; and**
 - **Nurture Our Memorable Streets**



Old Town Master Plan Intent

- Be a guiding document for future growth and preservation of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District
- Set forth principles to protect the National Register Historic District
- Provide guidelines for Unified Development Ordinance provisions and development application review
- Guide budgeting and capital improvement programming



Old Town Master Plan

- **Identifies over 100 implementation strategies to assist in achieving the vision for Old Town**
- **Strategies are organized in the following functional areas:**
 - **Policy Recommendations & Regulatory Changes;**
 - **Planning Strategies;**
 - **Capital Improvement Projects;**
 - **Promote Old Town;**
 - **Economic Development Strategies; and**
 - **Funding Mechanisms**



Completed Initiatives

- **Adopted the Old Town District Code, which is now incorporated into Article 5 of the Unified Development Ordinance**
- **Created development checklists that specify the requirements for permit approval**
- **Created a one-stop permitting shop that eliminated the need to visit different agencies**
- **Included best watershed management practices in the Town's Unified Development Ordinance**



Completed Initiatives

- **Established specific parking requirements for the entire Old Town area, lessening the impact of parking requirements in the historic town core**
- **Prioritized infrastructure improvements in Old Town and provided funding generated from the Town of Bluffton TIF District**
- **Established a Stormwater Utility Fund**
- **Trained a Staff member in grants research and writing**



On-Going Initiatives

- **There are 52 strategies that have been adopted into routine application reviews and other daily operations including, but limited to the following:**
 - **Designing great streets by including pedestrian amenities; coordinating public and private site elements, planting street trees, adding landscaping in public areas, and providing on-street parking;**
 - **Minimizing pavement and keeping stormwater clean through best management practices, requiring and enhancing riparian buffers, and using pervious materials wherever possible;**
 - **Working with other community organizations to promote Old Town; and**
 - **Identifying and applying for grant and other funding opportunities to assist in the Old Town Master Plan Implementation**
 - **Appoint Town Architect/Designer (contractual basis)**



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- **Preserved land at Oyster Factory Park through the Trust for Public Land and Beaufort County**
- **Improved Oyster Factory Park and the public boat ramp:**
 - **Implementation of stormwater BMPs;**
 - **Stabilization of the May River bank;**
 - **Demolition of unsafe structures;**
 - **Provision of pervious vehicle and boat trailer parking;**
 - **Construction of a pavilion, fire pit, and oyster tables; and**
 - **Addition of a nature trail, bathroom renovation, and other site amenities**



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- **Improved DuBois Park:**
 - Demolition of unsafe structures;
 - Construction of sidewalks and parking;
 - Landscaping enhancements,;
 - Drainage improvements including a rain garden; and
 - Addition of lighting, and provision of various site amenities
- **Acquired property at May River Road and Bluffton Road for development of a pocket park and wayfinding elements**
- **Improved Pritchard Street Park**



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- Stabilized the Garvin House, a contributing structure, and created a Preservation and Interpretation Plan for the long-term preservation and restoration of the earliest known freedman owned and built home on the May River (built circa 1870);



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- **Added drainage, sidewalks, crosswalks, on-street parking, lighting, landscaping, traffic calming, and other streetscape improvements along Calhoun Street, May River Road, and Bruin Road**



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- **Provided on-street parking, bike lanes and traffic calming on Bluffton Road**
- **Expanded sewer service through the extension of 2,000 linear feet of sewer line along Bruin Road, Maiden Lane, and Church Street providing service to 23 properties, of which 16 connections have been established**



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- **Constructed sidewalks along Lawrence and Thomas Heyward streets**
- **Demolished and removed 11 unsafe, uninhabitable structures**
- **Stabilized the historic structure known as the “Red Dot” located at the corner of May River Road and DuBois Lane (current initiative)**



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- Renovated the interior and exterior of Town Hall
- Adaptively reused structures at 1261 and 1264 May River for Town Engineering and Stormwater offices, respectively



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- Implemented a Neighborhood Stabilization Program Grant through construction of 6 affordable single-family homes as part of the Wharf Street Redevelopment Project



Town of Bluffton Old Town Investment

- **Installed 79 rain barrels and 15 rain gardens through investment of the Section 319 Grant to improve the stormwater quality within the May River Watershed, as well as educate residents and visitors about the importance of stormwater management**
- **Stabilized bank of Verdier Cove**





Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- **Development of the Calhoun Street Promenade that includes:**
 - 82,200 square feet of building footprints (39,200 square feet of footprint built currently); and
 - 64 residential units (32 residential units built currently)



Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- **Development of the Carson Cottages that includes the construction of 8 new structures (3 built currently totaling 6,050 square feet)**



Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- **Construction of Stock Farm that includes the development of 41 mixed-use lots (3 lots developed currently with 2 residential uses and 1 commercial use)**
- **Construction of Tabby Roads that includes the development of 52 mixed-use lots (7 lots developed currently with residential uses)**



Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- **Bluffton Business Club new office building construction totaling 2,500 square feet with a carriage house adding 580 square feet**
- **AIM Associates financial office new construction totaling 1,889 square feet**
- **Beaufort County Schools M.C. Riley Early Childhood Learning Center totaling 43,300 square feet**



Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- **Restoration and relocation of the Cottage Bakery, a contributing structure, and construction of an addition of 790 square feet**
- **Restoration of Seven Oaks, a contributing structure, totaling 2,300 square feet**
- **Restoration of the Rhodes Cottage, a contributing structure, totaling 1,530 square feet**
- **Restoration of the Pine House, a contributing structure, totaling 3,687 square feet**
- **Preston Pottery addition to support a live-work structure;**



Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- **Roof restoration of the Card House, a contributing structure**
- **Filling Station Art Gallery adaptive use of a former gas station**
- **Pluff Mudd Gallery addition of 120 square feet**
- **May River Montessori addition of 2,293 square feet**
- **Expansion of natural gas service along May River Road, Bruin Road, Goethe Road, Guerrard Avenue, Robertson Street, and throughout the Tabby Roads development**



Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- **Construction of numerous new detached single-family homes**
- **Construction of numerous residential and non-residential restorations and additions**
- **Voluntary removal of unsafe, uninhabitable structures**



Private and Other Public Investment in Old Town

- Organization, promotion, and hosting of many Old Town festivals by community organizations including the weekly Farmer's Market, Bluffton Village Festival, Arts & Seafood Festival, Beer & Brat Festival, among others
- Establishment and retention of many new businesses including restaurants, salons, galleries, clothing stores, personal service businesses, and professional offices



Future Initiatives

- **Policy Recommendations and Regulatory Changes**
 - **Provide application scorecards rating a development's success in meeting community goals and allowing priority treatment for those that do**
 - **Allow development by-right for projects that meet specific plan objectives**



Future Initiatives

- **Planning Strategies**

- Inventory and map the locations of vacant land and derelict buildings
- Identify opportunity sites and consolidate parcels to allow development at a scale that offers feasibility to the type of use desired
- Identify a use for properties that might benefit from infill development
- Target new users and promote inventoried opportunities to new investors
- Identify sites for shared parking and meet with property owners to set the terms of use
- Consider the creation of an infiltration street
- Establish a land bank with funding from local business owners
- Collaborate with economic development partners on the formation of a land bank to acquire key parcels in Old Town to preserve them for appropriate and supportive development



Future Initiatives

- **Planning Strategies**

- Adopt a “Smart Building Code” which is clear and eliminates arbitrary requirements to avoid the need of frequent variances and limits the legal obstacles to building improvement or renovation
- Revisit the Bluffton Historic Small Home Program and work with a local non-profit to enable financial controls to maintain affordability of the homes
- Develop a town-wide housing strategy that accommodates the current and future housing market and provides market-feasible locations for a mix and range of residents thereby helping to stabilize Bluffton neighborhoods
- Adopt a Form Based Code and add inclusionary zoning rules to the Zoning Ordinance mandating a percentage of affordable units in every new development and redevelopment project in Old Town
- Implement a real estate transfer fee or work with private developers to increase the amount of green space in Old Town
- Add additional public spaces south of Bridge Street
- Focus efforts on historic preservation and restoration of older structures in need of repair including the implementation of a local property tax abatement program for the rehabilitation of structures in Old Town



Future Initiatives

- **Capital Improvement Projects**

- Approach the property owner to see about purchasing the property near the Calhoun Street Public Dock and make the first priority for allocating funds be for the acquisition of land to form the Calhoun Street Park (located near the Calhoun Street Dock)
- For 5 years or more there should be a sustained investment in the Town's annual budget to restore and maintain Old Town's tree canopy
- Further enhance the Town Dock as part of the implementation of the Calhoun Street Park
- Restore the historic buildings on the property near the Calhoun Street Public Dock and add a park space
- Provide additional street connections throughout the existing street grid
- Add pedestrian facilities along the existing bridges on Bridge Street
- Make improvements to allow for public viewing areas along the bridges crossing Huger and Heyward coves
- Connect green spaces and parks visually by well-planned trails and pathways
- Build a new, long lasting structure with long life-cycle costs in Old Town, perhaps at the four-way stop (May River Road and Bluffton Road), which proudly reflects the character, quality, and ideals of the Bluffton Community to house Town Council and day-to-day operations of Town government



Future Initiatives

- **Promote Old Town**
 - The Town should host its own promotion efforts for the Old Town Master Plan, as well as work with the Chamber of Commerce, Old Town Merchant's Association, and the Historical Preservation Society
 - The Preservation Society, in coordination with the Town, should pursue a revolving fund program similar to that of the Historic Savannah Foundation.



Future Initiatives

- **Economic Development Strategies**

- Create a system to inventory housing, retail, and office uses, among others, to show opportunities in the market, as well as development trends
- Conduct annual inventories of land using the Town's GIS system and make the results of the annual inventory available on the Town's website
- The Old Town Merchant's Society should create and update a detailed list of the businesses and services to target for locating or relocating a second location to Old Town
- The Old Town Merchants Society should collaborate with the Town on the implementation of economic development programs and should assist new and existing businesses in creating a more complete retail center of Old Town
- The Town, Chamber, and local businesses should collaborate to form a Small Business Investment Corporation (SBIC) to offer business assistance



Future Initiatives

- **Funding Mechanisms**

- General Obligation Bonding should be used to foster redevelopment, preservation, and public improvements
- The Town should meet with local lenders and the preservation community to assess the potential for a revolving fund to assist with historic preservation efforts in Old Town
- The Town should designate a person to manage grants and tax credit programs and to educate the public on the variety of available funding sources through an information program, including the Town's website



Observations

- **Public investment of approximately \$7 million**
- **Private investment of no less than approximately \$45 million**
- **Old Town remained an active real estate market during a global recession**
- **Added many new businesses in the last 5 years**
- **Added many new residents in the last 5 years**
- **Many examples of investment in the structures that contribute to our Old Town**
- **Old Town is both a tourist destination and a livable, desirable neighborhood**



Questions

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